



U.S. Department of Justice

Thomas Scott Woodward
United States Attorney
Northern District of Oklahoma

110 West Seventh Street, Suite 300
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119

(918)382-2700

NEWS RELEASE

November 17, 2010
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Contact: R. Trent Shores

U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL HOLDER ANNOUNCES ESTABLISHMENT
OF OFFICE OF TRIBAL JUSTICE

United States Attorney Thomas Scott Woodward joins Attorney General Eric Holder today in announcing the establishment of the Office of Tribal Justice as a separate component within the organizational structure of the Department of Justice. The action underscores the department's commitment to tribal issues, and is required by the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010, which was signed into law by the president on July 29, 2010. The statute was adopted with the support of the department and the administration.

President Obama declared November 2010 as National Native American Heritage Month.

"I am proud to say today we have formally established the Office of Tribal Justice (OTJ) as a component of the Justice Department," said Attorney General Holder. "In the coming years, OTJ will play an important role in continuing the critical dialogue between the department and tribal governments on matters including public safety. The establishment of OTJ as a permanent component in the department has been a priority for me and this administration, and it is a critical step in our work to improve coordination and collaboration with tribal communities."

"The establishment of the Office of Tribal Justice as a permanent component will further enhance our ability to address the public safety needs of Indian Country in northeastern Oklahoma. The U.S. Attorney's Office looks forward to continuing to work with OTJ and local Tribes to ensure justice in tribal communities in this District," said United States Attorney Woodward.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Oklahoma located in Tulsa currently has three experienced Assistant United States Attorneys dedicated to Indian Country issues.

The Office of Tribal Justice was originally established in 1995 as a unit within the Office of the Deputy Attorney General in response to tribal concerns. Since that time, the Office of Tribal Justice has served as the primary channel for tribes to communicate their concerns to the department, helped coordinate policy on Indian affairs both within the department and with other federal agencies, and sought to ensure that the department and its components work with tribes on a government-to-government basis.

The Office of Tribal Justice takes its place today as a standalone, permanent component within the department's organizational structure, with internal managerial authority and an established reporting structure through the associate and deputy attorneys general. Over the course of the last 15 years, the Office of Tribal Justice has gained wide acceptance and support throughout the government and among Indian tribes. It is recognized by many as the expert within the federal government on a wide variety of legal issues affecting Indian country.

In addition to fulfilling its historical mission, the Office of Tribal Justice continues to play a key role in the department's ongoing initiative to improve public safety in Indian country. In September, hundreds of American Indian and Alaska Native communities received almost \$127 million to enhance law enforcement, bolster justice systems, prevent youth substance abuse, serve sexual assault and elder victims, and support other efforts to combat crime. These grants are the first under the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation, a new effort combining 10 different Department of Justice grant programs into a single solicitation.

In January 2010, the deputy attorney general directed all U.S. Attorneys' Offices with districts containing Indian Country (44 out of 93) to: meet and consult with tribes in their district annually; develop an operational plan addressing public safety in Indian country; work closely with tribal law enforcement on improving public safety in tribal communities, and to pay particular attention to violence against women in Indian country and make prosecuting these crimes a priority.

The Office of Tribal Justice continues to fulfill the department and administration's commitment to a consultation and coordination policy that ensures effective communication with Indian tribes. The director of the office is the official designated to ensure departmental compliance with Executive Order 13175, *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments*. The office frequently engages in tribal consultations and related government-to-government communications with leaders from Indian tribes. This engagement has

involved representatives from a variety of components including: U.S. Attorneys' Offices, the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Explosives, the Office of Justice Programs, Office on Violence Against Women and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

The office is staffed by a director, Tracy Toulou, two deputy directors and a special assistant, all of whom are serving on detail from other department components, and its operating expenses are borne by those components. The president's FY 2011 Budget Request includes additional staff and direct funding for the office.

The Federal Register announcement, published today, can be found at: www.federalregister.gov/articles/2010/11/17/2010-28947/office-of-tribal-justice.

####